

## Guidance for Research Incentives

The purpose of research incentives is to show appreciation to your subjects for their time and effort in participation. Research incentives, therefore, cannot be coercive or in any way entice subjects to participate in research. Even with the use of incentives, participation always must be voluntary on the part of the subjects.

Incentives to participate are **not** considered benefits.

The UHSRC suggests the following as reasonable incentives for participation:

1. Cash, provided it is a trivial amount
2. Gift Cards, particularly for children
3. Items of negligible cash value, such as toys, t-shirts, mugs, etc., particularly for children

### *Use of Incentives for Children*

The UHSRC prefers that research subjects who are young children (under age 15 not be paid in cash. Generally, cash payments are delivered to the parent or the parent may require the child to give the cash to the parent. In such cases, the parent is paid for the child's participation, which, in addition to being unfair to the child, opens up the prospect of coerced participation (i.e., the parent forces the child to participate in the study so that the parent can get the cash compensation). Children should be compensated with small toys or, for older children, gift cards. If researchers wish to compensate children with cash, they must be sensitive to how the cash will be delivered and who the ultimate recipient will be. Address these issues in the UHSRC application, because the UHSRC is required to review compensation for fairness and coercion.

### *Use of Incentives for Vulnerable Populations*

Care must be taken when compensating other populations who are vulnerable to coercion (e.g., decisionally-impaired individuals, individuals living in poverty, physically-impaired individuals, individuals with substance abuse disorder, individuals with psychiatric or psychological disorders, etc.). The researcher must be sensitive to who will ultimately receive the compensation (it should go to the subject, not the caretaker or guardian) and to the perception of the compensation. That is, giving gift cards instead of cash to individuals with psychiatric disorders may be seen as paternalistic and insulting. Researchers should provide justification for their compensation scheme in the UHSRC application.

### *Use of Course Credit as an Incentive*

When course credit or extra credit is offered as an incentive for participation, the Principal Investigator must take care that the credit is not coercive and does not unduly influence individuals to participate in the research. The following guidelines should be observed when offering course credit:

1. The amount of credit offered and how the credit can be obtained must be described in the informed consent form.

2. The amount of credit must be reasonable for the amount of time and effort required for participation.
3. There must be an alternate means of obtaining the same credit for students who do not wish to participate in the study. This alternate must be comparable in terms of time and effort to participating in the study.

*Use of Drawings or Raffles as an Incentive*

The State of Michigan [Traxler-McCauley-Law-Bowman Bingo Act \(Act 372 of 1972\)](#) defines a raffle as a drawing in which participants are offered a chance to win a prize in exchange for providing something of value, such as information about themselves collected as research data, and specifies that such raffles require a license from the State of Michigan. EMU qualifies for an exclusion from such licenses in specific situations, per the Bingo Act, section 432.105d.

In order to use a drawing or raffle as compensation for research participation, the following criteria must be met:

1. The total cash value of **all** prizes (cash, gift cards, prizes) awarded on any given day must not be larger than \$100.
2. The drawing must take place at a “single gathering.” That is, individuals may not be entered into a pool for a prize more than one time (e.g., subjects cannot be entered into a drawing for a first prize of a \$50 gift card and a second prize of a \$25 gift card).
3. There is no pre-sale of tickets for the drawing.
4. The informed consent document must contain a description of the drawing process.

If researchers want to have a drawing for a prize or group of prizes valued at more than \$100, they must meet the Bingo Act stipulations for a sweepstakes under the following criteria:

1. All individuals recruited or informed about the study must be eligible for the drawing. That is, study participation or providing data may not be a requirement for entry into the raffle.
2. The informed consent document must contain:
  - a. The date and location of the drawing,
  - b. The odds of winning, and
  - c. A description of how winners will be notified.

If you have any questions about your compensation plan, please contact the UHSRC at 734-487-3090 or [human.subjects@emich.edu](mailto:human.subjects@emich.edu).